

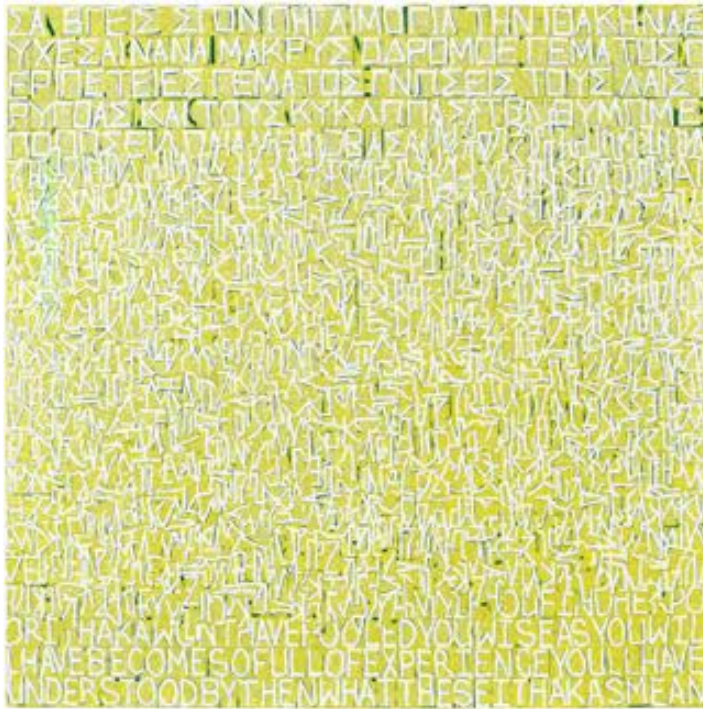
# GAGOSIAN

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Rick Lowe to Exhibit Paintings and Works on Paper in Athens

Exhibitions Open at the Benaki Museum / Pireos 138 on June 1 and Gagosian on June 7

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Rick Lowe, *Ithaka #1*, 2023, acrylic and paper collage on canvas, 84 × 84 inches (213.4 × 213.4 cm) © Rick Lowe Studio.  
Photo: Thomas Dubrock

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*Documenta 14* was subtitled *Learning from Athens; I felt that I had been learning from Athens for a long time even before ever having been there.*

—Rick Lowe

**ATHENS, May 1, 2023**—Gagosian is pleased to announce two exhibitions of paintings and works on paper by Rick Lowe in Athens: *Hic Sunt Dracones (Here Lay Dragons)*. *Mapping the Unknown: A project by Rick Lowe* at the Benaki Museum / Pireos 138, which takes the form of a dialogue with the institution’s historical collection, and *Still Learning from Athens*, Lowe’s first exhibition at the gallery’s location in the city.

Lowe is known for works of “social sculpture,” in which he exercises skills in civic organization, political agitation, real estate development, and architectural criticism, and for related paintings and works on paper. Since reading Aristotle, he has maintained a fascination with Greek culture, and upon first visiting Greece in 2015 as a guest of the Stavros Niarchos Foundation, he immersed himself in the locale by walking from the suburb of Vouliagmeni to central Athens. Upon returning the following year to begin preparations for his participation in *Documenta 14: Learning from Athens*, he reengaged with the city as an urban space by working on *Victoria Square Project* (2016–), an ongoing participatory and collaborative intervention exploring interactions of Greek natives with immigrants and refugees. “After two years of *Documenta* planning and hosting exhibitions,” writes Lowe, “most artists and visitors moved on; I continued to learn from and build relationships with Greeks and immigrants.”

Lowe's exhibition at the Benaki Museum / Pireos 138 includes works related to both *Victoria Square Project* and *Project Row Houses* (1993–2018). In these collaged paintings and works on paper, the artist emphasizes the links between his practical strategies and their visual aspects, combining interpretations of the public initiatives' realization with variations on mark, palette, and surface texture. Lowe and curators Yorgos Tzirtzilakis and Polina Kosmadaki have also selected historical materials from the museum's collection, focusing on clothing, jewelry, and other bodily adornments. By juxtaposing his paintings with these items, they explore interpretations of mapping and the resonance of folk handicrafts.

Among the paintings on view at Gagosian are three whose series title, *Ithaka*, derives from a poem by C. P. Cavafy (1863–1933). Some of the works' markings are derived from Cavafy's Greek verse, which Lowe collaged to produce an abstracted script that, while unreadable, feels familiar. (It also recalls the artist's manipulations of drawings he made after playing dominoes with residents of Houston's Third Ward during the making of *Project Row Houses*, which reveal the game's resemblance to a city plan.) *Ithaka #1* (2023) incorporates collaged texts of eight Cavafy poems, beginning in Greek and ending in English, while *Ithaka #2* (2023) arranges the same poems' fragmented elements in a maplike configuration, and *Ithaka #3* (2023) incorporates a partially obscured layer of scenic views in acknowledgment of the area's status as a tourist hub. In *Fire #4: This Time Athens* (2023), Lowe introduces a palette of red, yellow, and white in response to riots that were sparked by a Greek train crash, while an underlying collage is composed of images from a 2019 Athens mayoral forum.

**Rick Lowe** was born in 1961 in rural Russell County, Alabama, and lives and works in Houston. Collections include Brooklyn Museum, New York; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; Institute of Contemporary Art, Miami; High Museum of Art, Atlanta; Nerman Museum of Contemporary Art, Overland Park, Kansas; Menil Collection, Houston; Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; and the UBS Art Collection. A recent solo exhibition took place at Art League Houston (2020–21). Lowe also participated in Documenta 14, Athens (2017). Lowe's numerous community art projects include *Project Row Houses*, Houston (1993–2018); *Watts House Project*, Los Angeles (1996–2012); *Borough Project* (with Suzanne Lacy and Mary Jane Jacob), Charleston, South Carolina (2003); *Small Business/Big Change*, Anyang Public Art Program, Korea (2010); *Trans.lation*, Dallas (2013); *Victoria Square Project*, Athens (2017–18); *Greenwood Art Project*, Tulsa, Oklahoma (2018–21); and *Black Wall Street Journey*, Chicago (2021–). In 2013 President Barack Obama appointed Lowe to the National Council on the Arts, and in 2014 Lowe was named a MacArthur Fellow. Lowe is currently a professor of interdisciplinary practice at the University of Houston.

#RickLowe

## **RICK LOWE**

*Still Learning from Athens*

Opening reception: Wednesday, June 7, 6–8pm

June 7–July 29, 2023

Gagosian, 22 Anapiron Polemou Street, Athens

*Hic Sunt Dracones (Here Lay Dragons). Mapping the Unknown: A project by Rick Lowe*

Opening reception: Thursday, June 1, 8–11pm

June 1–July 30, 2023

Benaki Museum / Pireos 138, Athens

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## **Press**

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